

# THE SOCIETY FOR PROCESS THOUGHT

Professor Michael Redhead  
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8 February 1991

Dear Professor Redhead,

Open Forum: 2 March 1991

I trust you are having an enjoyable and fulfilling sabbatical and that both these adjectives apply to the 2nd. Enclosed is our spring programme and a map. I very much look forward to meeting you and your wife, whom I spoke to recently.

Susan Harrison of the Oxford University Press, who is coming to the meeting, tells me she has sent you a copy of John Barrow's book; I have just received mine, addressed (as is not unusual) to the Society for Processed Thought.

John Barrow tells me he is going to use the overhead projector at the church. (It is just possible to reach the projector to change the slides while using the hand-held mike.) I don't know whether you will also want to use the OHP, but I should perhaps warn you that the acoustics of the building could be better. A number of people likely to be present are getting on in years and hard of hearing so they will want you to use a microphone, but the loudspeakers are positioned (facing towards the back of the church, naturally) on both sides of the church high above about the third pew back, so that those who sit in the front two rows get a distracting echo, as it were, from behind them. They are warned in advance but unfortunately, as their sight often isn't too good either, they have to sit near the screen if an OHP is being used.

Some speakers like to use an OHP to display the notes or outline of their talk. As a supplement or alternative, there seems to be a good and growing custom of providing audiences with a brief one-page outline, which not only helps the non-specialists but reduces to a degree the chances of the speaker being badly misquoted or misrepresented. If we have made arrangements to have The Times or another paper print an article in advance of the meeting, we have permission to reproduce that. They were interested in taking a piece from you but as you are on sabbatical I didn't want to ask you to consider another sacrifice of your time, and anyway with the war on in the Gulf they are particularly pushed for space. Sometimes a speaker, as last November and this coming June, sends us something relevant to reproduce that was printed elsewhere but of which he has copyright. When there isn't an article to use, and the speaker ordinarily makes legible notes anyway, we are sent these, or a brief abstract - just the sort of material that is often used with an OHP. We never need it much in advance; if it reaches me a couple of days before the meeting that is fine. Please think of this as a suggestion, in no way a requirement; not all our speakers have anything to be

handed out in advance. One speaker, set to answer a particular question as the title of his address, sent me a one-sentence abstract (which I left unreproduced) saying that the answer was Yes. In his lecture, he gave the answer No, and when this was queried at lunch he replied: "I couldn't remember what it was I wrote to you. Anyway, the decision was finely balanced!"

Additional written material we often hand out to the other participants (I prefer this description to "audience", which is too passive) is a bibliography. Sometimes this is a university reading list, or from a university reading list because we try to keep it to one page. Usually it is of works currently available, preferably inexpensive so mainly in paperback, with price if known, reputable but accessible to the non-specialist. If we overwhelmed them, for instance, with a long list on "The limits of science", the chances are they would read none of them. Perhaps the ideal would be to combine short notes or an abstract with a few choice reading suggestions at the end. John Barrow's new book comes furnished with a bibliography and I found those in his earlier books helpful.

Finally, I hope you are happy with the one-sentence summary under the title of your talk, which isn't intended to tie you down, hence the dots, but summarizes the gist of my initial discussion with you. Channel 4 currently has a series on New Age thinking (old age superstition?) made by its practitioners, and I recall telling you Bryan Appleyard had written a long article in The Sunday Times attacking it. Bookshops have whole sections devoted to it, reputable publishers like Bantam in the States and Penguin here have New Age imprints ("over my dead body" said the Penguin science editor to me), and a Harvard professor protested that his university bookstore had astrology in the front room with astronomy tucked away at the back. "Economics," murmured the manager.

While John has the morning to answer questions on his book and there will be some general discussion then, you have the beginning of the afternoon, before you are both on the platform, and I imagine you will want to use his subject/book as a jumping off point. The first sentence of the enclosed blurb should keep you going for a couple of hours but I suggest you try to keep it to half an hour, or even crisper if you'd prefer to keep some nuggets in reserve for the discussion, which must end sharp by four.

Thanks so much again for so readily agreeing to take part. I hope you and your wife will enjoy the experience.  
Yours sincerely,

*P. Atkins* 72 *Li*